SANCHEZ, Martin and Rosemarie

SPANISH - SPEAKING CITY COUNCIL

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NARRATOR'S

Martin Sanchez Rosemarie Sanchez
Signature of narrator

Martin & Rosemarie Sanchez
Name of narrator

2221 Fruitvale Av. # 809
Address

Oakland CA

(dated) 7-28-81

INTERVIEWER

Eleanor N. Swent
Signature of interviewer

Eleanor Swent
Name of interviewer

One King Av.
Address of interviewer

Piedmont - CA - 94611

(dated) 7-28-81

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General Topic of Interview Fruitvale History

Date 7-28-81 Place Posada de Colores Length

Narrator	Interviewer
Name Martin & Rosemarie Sanchez	Name Eleanor Swent
Address 2221 Fruitvale Av #809 Oakland	Address One King Av. Piedmont - CA 94611
Name & address of relative, friend Mother - Dominga Velasco	Relationship to narrator [friend, neighbor, etc.] none
Birthplace M. Austin - Denver R. Oakland	Length of acquaintance
Birthdate Jan. 12, 1919 Dec 6, 1931	Occasion of interview
Occupation(s) State of CA - employment & claims assistant retired - Pac. Tel.	

Interview Data

Subjects covered, in approximate order, spelling out names of persons and places mentioned

Estimated Time on Tape	Contents
1 - 100	R.M. Came to F.V. in '40's then 1954. M in 1959 met through community organizing & St. Elizabeth's, LBJ's poverty program. Mex. scholarship fund. Span. Speaking Unity Council - Guadalajara Club - Holy Name St. E. parish council.
80	M. b. in Denver - came to CA in '47 to escape bigotry - less bigotry here - more subtle - before Black migration
* 100	lived in W. Oakland - moved to F.V. to be w. Span. Comm. & St. E's.
	R.M. went to St. Anthony's school - children to St. E's.
200	M's sons - St. Mary's - because too many Blacks in pub. school
* 215 - 40	R.M. never felt discrimination - name Velasco. Sanchez name brings more - "Oakland the best place to be."

Use back of sheet if necessary

* 235 - Changes in F.V. - German → Spanish. Transportation better but vandalism more.

* 250 - Freeway changed Jingletown. Nimitz isolated people. MacArthur Fwy didn't. Safeway - Long's -

* 300-350 In '54, locally owned small businesses. Owners lived right there. describes neighborhood. Hank Kramer. "You could walk anytime of day or night." Guy's. Blue Chip Stamp store. B. of A. theater - Foothill theater. Our Lady's Home.

350-400 R.M. walked home for lunch from work. Changes in St. E's. Dimond Florist - Key System - to Bond St. Easy to go to S.F.

415 Streetcars used to be 3¢ to go downtown. Sr. Cits. can't afford to go to S.F. now.
Hamilton School - Sanborn Park used to have many things for young.

440 Not safe now. "Most of the people looked out for one another."
88¢ store - Owl store - Craig's Men's Store" Doggy Diner

* 450 "Every time a business closed ... it took something away."
Good Housekeeping Shop. American Trust. Bartoni's.
Evergreen Produce new - Korean couple. Windows broken.

* 475 Ozzie's Hardware - German - 45 years. "You could always find what you needed."

B 1- Now go to Safeway, Markets, Macy's, Smith's - San Leandro.
"overusing that term unemployed." "Vandals weren't taught any proper manners at home ... [or] school." Mostly Blacks, some Latins. "No whites in neighborhood." Littering, trashing. Even older people. "they don't take any pride."
Fran Matarese - OCO. Span. Speaking Unity Council Bldg. '69

100 Posada de Colores - S.S.U.C. got HUD grant. Description. Planning 5-year program for congregate housing.

225 A's - Raiders - Neighborhood more involved w. baseball because admission less. Soccer. Guadalajara - Cruz Azul.
Businesses - 2 restaurants (Span.) others on E. 14th, 23rd Av. groceries, garage.

275 Cannery closing - employed large percentage of residents.
Montgomery Ward - people unemployed, had to move for jobs.

* 300 - Radical Hispanic groups - still active on May 1.
"Groups that come in from outside. they make a lot of noise ... run out of steam." Laney College students, teachers.

350 - Resentment of bigotry - can be exploited by radicals.
"they don't represent any bona fide members of the F.V. Community
Fr. Oliver wouldn't allow this. Portugese - not aware of Native Am;

400 - Orchards in old days. No continuity with old Spanish - "Lost in the melting pot." Henry Mesta. St. Jarlath's. F.V. theater. OCO
Halfway House - St. Joseph's Home.

Rosemarie Velasco Sanchez and her husband Martin are an interesting couple, whose marriage is a direct consequence of their community organizing work. She is the daughter of Dominga Velasco, the acknowledged leader of the Mexican Community, so this is a second-generation leader.
He came here from Denver to escape bigotry, and found it less evident here, although he thinks it is present in subtle form. Rosemarie, on the other hand, growing up in West Oakland, never felt there was any bigotry. She became more aware of it after her marriage, partially because Sanchez is indisputably a Mexican name, while Velasco is possibly Italian.

From West Oakland, they moved to East Oakland, then to Fruitvale, where they were active in the work of St. Elizabeth's parish, the forming of the Spanish-Speaking Unity Council, and the OCO.

They remember fondly the halcyon days of Fruitvale with its many small businesses and close, friendly atmosphere. It is interesting to hear her story, some of which repeats what her mother Dominga told. Rosemarie is more pessimistic than her mother, perhaps because of the age difference. possibly just because their personalities are different. And yet the daughter is following in her mother's footsteps. They are obviously very close, as were her mother and grandmother, who lived to be over 100. This is truly a remarkable family of women.

Most of the community organizing seems to be an outgrowth of parental concern for their children.

Interviewwith: Martin and Rosemarie Sanchez
Interviewer: Eleanor Swent
Date: 7/28/81
Transcriber: Tamar J. Nelson
S: Abbreviation for Swent M: Abbreviation for Martin R: Rosemarie
Tape 1, Side 1

S: How long have you lived in Fruitvale?

M: I've lived here since 1959, in the Fruitvale area.

S: Both of you?

R: No, I've lived here much more - we moved here in 1954.

S: What organizations have you been active in?

R: Well, in Mexican Organization, it was a schoiarship fund; Spanish Speaking Unity Council and the Guadalajara Club which was mostly sports.

M: I was in St. Elizabeth's Holy Names Society at that time, later on the parish council got started to help the pastor with the fundraising and administration.

S: I gather that you felt that there was less bigotry here than in Colorado, did you find that true?

M: Yes, less bigotry although it's more subtle here than it was over there. There is quite a bit of bigotry here too, I guess anywhere where you have a mixture of ethnic groups...it was easier finding a job here and finding living conditions, social conditions were much better here. Before the 50's and 60's...

S: Why did you move to Fruitvale?

M: Because there was a heavier concentration of Spanish speaking people here. Mexican people and St. Elizabeth's here is quite an active church run by Franciscan order priests and they tend to have more activities so I like that also.

S: I take then that you were both very active in organizing the community. Was this as a result of something from St. Elizabeth's or did you people give the prod to the church?

R: I think it was a little bit of both...I think it's important to be aware of what's happening and ...this is why we became active in both school and church because of my children. They went through their school there (at St. Elizabeth's) so consequently we were connected

R: with the parent's club meetings...

M: One of the schools were just total confusion in the class rooms so for that reason I got them (his two sons) into St. Mary's. One of the conditions for having children in a catholic school was that the parents also participate as catholics...so I became involved.

R: When we first moved here it was mainly German, it was considered a German parish, but through the years and now the majority of the parish congregation are Hispanics...we have better transportation now with BART so close. But again, that has also brought some little problems... with the station a lot of people park their cars that shouldn't park them. Then there has been some vandalism in the parking area. I myself think it has helped because it's brightened up that area. It was quite a residential area, I think it's helped but some people feel, no, it's brought a lot of problems...

S: What about the freeway...?

M: It did tear up below quite a bit...there's a section down there...south of the freeway there's a little residential area, it's called Jingletown - I don't know why they call it that.

S: And do people still call it that?

M: They still call it yes, and this is south of the tracks on the freeway. Prior to the freeway going there it was more merged with this side of the freeway. But with the freeway it seems like it just isolated that community over there. There's no super markets down there, no shopping, no drug stores - nothing in the way of businesses outside of industrial business. So there's machine shops over there, and there's that big cement company that's down there by the estuary, one or two foundries, heavy industry and of course, there's the cannery that's going to be closed up now. The residents down there are mainly composed of Portuguese and Mexican Americans or Mexican immigrants, but there's very few Caucasians down there.

M: So the freeway did lower property values down there...they're at a disadvantage as far as goods and services are concerned. There are no shopping down there, there's no transportation down past the tracks over there, no bus lines running down there - so they have to walk over here in order to catch a bus to go anywhere.

S: What about the MacArthur freeway, that's newer isn't it? Did that do the same sort of thing?

M: That's newer...no there's a lot of activity on this side of the freeway.

S: Do you feel that most of the people who live in Fruitvale now work in the Fruitvale area?

M: No, they are usually residents that work away from the area. No business people who have their businesses close by.

S: Has this always been true?

R: No, when I first moved in '54, this little block between Fruitvale and 35th, we didn't have Safeway, we had a standard station on the corner, and then we had a very nice Mom and Pop grocery store that was owned by the family. They lived right there, and next to them there was a small thrift shop, also run by the owner. Next to that was a little coffee shop, just one counter and two tables, was one man and he owned it, then on the corner was Foothill pharmacy and it was also owned by Hank Kramer. He ran the pharmacy, it was quite a family neighborhood, you could walk any time of the night, come to the drug store, the soda fountain...and a long time ago, there used to be a pharmacy on this corner before the Standard station there used to be two pharmacies... Guy's has been on the other corner for quite some time now, then we had Blue Chip stamp store, that used to bring a lot of people...and when that was gone then people left...so there's been quite a change. A lot of businesses have closed up, we don't have a Mom and Pop store anymore, we have Safeway...weused to have a little theatre on 35th and Foothill-

R: Foothill Theatre. The Telephone Company also had another office right next to Foothill Theatre...which also employed a lot of people...

S: I noticed a little florist shop up here that has a sign on it that says since 1906...

R: I'm not sure about Thorstead's, that's possible. I know the one above it just this side of MacArthur Blvd. they were in business downtown in Oakland. It was called the Gardenia Shop, then they moved over here to the Fruitvale quite a few years ago, and they've been called Dimond Florist...of course the Key system is gone...a lot of people, I think, still miss it. That used to go as far as Bond Street I think, and that ran along E. 14th.

S: Did you go to San Francisco often?

R: On the train, yes. It was so easy, it was a lot of fun...the buses are nice too, I think we miss the orange-red trains.

S: They called it red, the red train, didn't they?

R: Years ago there used to be the red local, they used to call it the LOCO on 7th street but that was just on 7th street. That was red, red these were more an orange...

S: So the red train were locals?

R: The red ones we used to call it the red loco, went back and forth on 7th street.

M: L-O-C-O not local...

R: Yeah, it looked like it was loco because it used to kind of go back and forth...it cost 3¢ to take the street cars...our senior citizens now can't always afford to go to San Francisco because BART is a little expensive for them...

S: Does your daughter live...

R: She lives on 21rst Ave. now. She's still here in East Oakland, and my son is in the air force, he's in Korea...he was brought up here in Fruitvale area, and there was so many things for him to do in those

R: days. They seemed to have more activities for the youngsters. Hamilton school in those years offered programs for them during the summer, and Sanborn Park...used to have nice activities...and I think as some people moved out and the newer people moved in, or familiar places closed up... we used to have an 88¢ store on East 14th which closed up and then our Owl Drug stores already closed up too, and Craig's Men store, it was there for around 40 years. Everytime a business that has been in this area for a few years (closed up) that has taken away a little bit of the neighborhood...it just isn't the same anymore...

S: You don't feel that small, little businesses are coming in?

R: No, I don't think so. The ones that do come in don't last very long because they usually have their windows broken. We do have a couple of restaurants that have opened here on Fruitvale that seem to be doing pretty good...we also used to have two very nice hardware stores right here. One was Ozzie's, and he had been there, oh, I think for 45 years. He was German, very lovely, you could go to Ozzie's and you could always find what you needed...

Tape 1, Side 2

S: On this window breaking business, do you think that it's young people doing it, unemployed...?

M: I think they're overusing that term, "unemployed," nowadays people never have work and don't want to work...the vandals weren't taught any proper manners at home and I think it's an outgrowth of home training and school.

S: Do you think they're mostly Blacks?

R: No...

M: They're mostly Blacks, but there are some Latins and some other - well, there are hardly no Whites left in the neighborhood...

R: I think they're mostly Blacks because of our composition of the area is

R: mostly Hispanics and Blacks now...an example is over here at Guy's Drugs, you have two benches there for the bus stop...there's one very nice trash can that the city puts up...but every morning they have to sweep. If they don't sweep it's terrible - you find anything, you name it, it's there: bags, empty cans, broken bottles. They go by and instead of walking one or two steps to that trash can, they throw it on the sidewalk...I have seen even older people doing it, I don't mean just young people, they just don't care...they don't take any pride as they used to. We do have a nice group from the OCO. They're young people and Father Matarece had them last summer. They go to different areas like this and they take one day to keep that place clean to show the people that it can be done, but I don't know how effective it's been. So there are people trying to better the community. Of course we have the new building that the Spanish Speaking Unity Council put up in '69...

S: Were you active in organizing that?

R: Yes, from the very beginning...

S: Soccer, of course, is a big international game...

R: It is, and as I said a lot of our Hispanic people around here do look forward to the soccer teams. There's several now, there used to be just one years ago, there used to be the Guadalajara. Now we have the Cruz Azúl and they have several of these...

S: And these are local?

R: Yes, and they compete. We've seen a lot of business go up with Spanish speaking people...between about 24th or 23rd in that little area there on East 14th there are about 2-3 bakeries, 2-3 little places that have meat, different cuts of meat especially for preparing Mexican dishes and there's even a garage I notice that's run by Mexican people.

S: What about employment, the cannery is closing, that of course was a

S: employer,..is that going to make a drastic difference?

M: Well, it's not going to do any good to the neighborhood. They employed a large percentage of the residents in the area and they did provide employment for some full-time, year-around jobs and a lot of seasonal work. Yes, it is going to make a big impact on the economy here.

R: When Montgomery Wards closed their store, what they have now is just an outlet, a lot of people became unemployed and they moved to other areas where they found employment...a lot of the people that were here back in the '60's moved out to Hayward, where they found more employment.

S: When I moved here to Oakland, about 15 years ago, there were some very radical/revolutionary Hispanic groups here...do you remember that group?

R: I remember that some of them were students that were going to Laney College...one of the things that I think is good is that they're bringing back a lot of our history. What Mexico was like, what California was like before...

M: The point I'm trying to make here is that they (the radicals) don't represent me, and they don't represent any bonified residents of the Fruitvale community. They're outsiders that come in and make a lot of noise and make it look like there's a revolution going on...

R: As a matter of fact, they're groups that Father Oliver wouldn't even allow to be or have anything to do with the Church. He's been wonderful, he's been a Godsend to this whole area. He came in 1960 and he just left now this year. He helped the people that really needed it... I know there was one professor at Laney who was beginning quite a bit of descension even among our own people, and this wasn't right, but Father Oliver wouldn't allow this...

S: At one time, I understand there were a lot of Indians here in Fruitvale?

M: I don't know that there's ever been a lot of Indians here in Fruitvale...

R: No, not a great deal, a lot of German people, and then many years ago there were Portuguese people. Fruitvale used to be called Fruitvale because it had a whole lot of fruit trees. There wasn't too many businesses that I remember as a little girl...you could walk around, there was different parks, a lot of the areas where homes are at now, were park areas...

M: The Fruitvale area before it became paved, was large homes and some fruit orchards. A lot of peaches were grown here...it was all one large grove of fruit trees and apricots and peaches, all the way past MacArthur Blvd...

END TAPE 1, SIDE 2

COMMENTARY ON INTERVIEWS OF MARTIN & ROSEMARIE SANCHEZ

This tape examines the more recent changes in the Fruitvale community such as BART, the freeways, the losses of small business and the Key system.

Rosemarie Sanchez is the daughter of Dominga Velasco. It is noteworthy that Rosemarie is active in the community like her mother and she speaks Spanish as well as fluent English. It would have been interesting to see how many of the customs that were carried out in her home when she was a child are now continued in her home today.

Apparently both Rosemarie and her husband Martin became involved in community activities because of their children. Martin's primary involvement seems to be with the church. He became active when he enrolled his two sons in St. Mary's. He enrolled them in a paroquial school because the public schools were, to quote him, " total confusion." Interestingly enough, one of the conditions for having children in the school was that the parents also participate as "Catholics." This is intersting since most paroquial schools don't require that the parent be active Catholics(even though most are). Why did St. Mary's make enrollment conditional? Was it the exception or the rule?

Rosemarie Sanchez became involved in both school and church because her children went to St. Elizabeth's where she joined the parent's club. She is also very active in the Spanish Speaking Unity Council.

The freeways have often been viewed as fragmenting the communities of East and West Oakland. Upon being asked his opinion on the subject Martin commented that it had the effect of isolating the community now called Jingletown. Jingletown lies south of the freeway and is primarily industrial containing one or two foundries, heavy industry, a cement company, machine shops and the cannery (which is in the process of closing down).

Evidently this section of town never had shopping facilities so after the freeway came in they found themselves with no goods or services as well as having no transportation since the buses don't run down there. Martin thinks that the property values went down on that side after the introduction of the freeway. The majority of the residents are Mexican immigrants, Mexican Americans and Portuguese. Because many of them own their own homes they do not want to move. It will be important to keep an eye on Jingletown especially now that one of the major employers, the cannery, is closing.

Because the Fruitvale has transportation and shopping facilities, Martin didn't seem to think that the MacArthur freeway had much impact either way.

Another major change that occurred in the Fruitvale (and many other communities) is that it has changed from a fairly self-sufficient one where the residents either worked in their own business or major employers such as the cannery and Montgomery Wards, to one in which the majority of the residents commute outside of the community to their jobs.

Rosemarie felt very strongly about the loss of small business from the area, commenting that each time a busieness closed it took "away a ltte bit of the neighborhood - it just isn't the same anymore..."

Both interviewees stressed that new businesses have many problems getting started due to vandalism such as the breaking of windows. Some of the businesses which have survived appear to be those which cater to the spanish speaking populus. Is this because the vandals are being selective? Or is it that the owners are discouraged less easily? Perhaps they still make enough to cover the damages? It would be very interesting to see if vandalism is perhaps an expression of the resistance tocertain groups moving into the neighborhood.

Mrs. Sanchez also mentioned a general decline in the pride which

residents take in their neighborhood along with the increases in vandalism and crime.

It would appear that most of the dandalism and crime are blamed on the youth, Blacks and Hispanics though Mr. Sanchez appeared to think that more Blacks were involved that Latinos. Like the older interviewees both Mr. and Mrs. Sanchez placed the blame in the home and at the schools. But why has this change occured in the homes and the schools? The suggestion here is that the parents simply do not care as much and the educational system is not living up to its job. Is this type of change occuring also in West Oakland and other communities or is it unique to the Bay Area? Is the concept of "Neighborhood" and "community" obsolete today? These are some paths which could be pursued.

Transportation has undergone a drastic change in Oakland. Earlier they had street cars, the red local and the Key system. Today they have buses and BART. Rosemarie spoke nostalgically of the orange-red trains of the Key system and the trips to San Francisco. Both spoke of the "LOCO"(the red local) so dubbed by the Spanish speaking community because it looked like it was crazy as it wove back and forth.

BART is too expensive for the elderly to use very often and has brought along bad with the good. Mrs. Sanchez herself thinks that it "brightened up the area" but other residents feel that it has brought an increase in crime and vandalism (primarily in the parking lot) as well as congestion due to people that park illegally.

It is intersting to note that people seem to miss not only the inexpensiveness of the old systems but also their bright colors. It makes one wonder if the buses and BART were also brightly colored if the communities would perhaps relate to them more, see them as part of the neighborhood? Perhaps the old systems added a unique touch to the neighborhood as do the street cars to San Francisco. The nicknaming of the red local to LOCO is another interesting phenomenon. Did other ethnic groups nickname the various systems? Do people utilize the new systems as much as the old one? Why and why not? It is possible that if the residents were genuinely fond of these systems that their loss could have been viewed as just another blow to what they viewed as their community.

A factor which needs to be looked into more is what occurred during the late 60's and early 70's. Upon being questioned Mr. Sanchez became very emotional saying that the radicals are only outside agitators who basically just to a lot of talking and who are not members of the community. Mrs. Sanchez mentioned that Father Oliver and the Church were active in squelching such activity. This could be a fascinating aspect to delve into.

The gap of information for this period in Oakland points to the fact that an interview of a younger person is necessary not only to balance the project but to fill some of these gaps. A neighborhhod is after all composed of all different age groups. This would also help to show in what direction the community is going today, and how the youth of today feel compared to those of yesterday. How do the youth view the Church? Are there many activities in which they can become involved, like there used to be? etc.

Another factor which hasn't been examined is the role of social agencies. The Fruitvale is unique in that it has many agencies which are specifically aimed at helping the spanish speaking population. The Spanish Speaking Unity Council, Clinica de la Raza, Centro Salud Mental, Centro Legal de la Raza, MATA and many others. Did these agencies come about because the community fought for them? Are they utilized? The Clinica is known nationally as one of the better community clinics in existence today, is the community aware of this and proud? Now that their existence is being threatened does the community care?

In summary this tape offered insight to some of the more recent changes in the Fruitvale community but research is still necessary in the areas of youth and the social agencies.

Rosemarie and Martin Sanchez